

565 (S bedoyu ne perekoryaisya, terpi!). And then if life is all suffer-
 154 ing, why be afraid of death, he would ask himself. "Be afraid to
 [761] live, do not be afraid to die! To live is more terrible than to
 die"; "We do not rejoice in life, but in death."¹⁰

565 Identification with suffering and preoccupation with death
 785 which has been conditioned by family experiences and rein-
 788 forced on the community level led the Russian peasants to prac-
 tice long and hard fasts, and to undertake difficult pilgrimages to
 far off places of worship. "There is only one salvation, fast and
 prayer"; "We don't live on bread, but on prayer" they would
 say. Long and hard fasting and prayer of the Great-Russian
 peasants were not only manifestations of his identification with
 suffering and his feeling of helplessness and complete depend-
 ency upon superior forces, but were perhaps also expressions of
 his tendency to completely retire from an unsatisfactory and an
 unhappy world.

792 The extremes of this suffering and withdrawal from the world
 156 were reached by anchorites who sought complete solitude in
 wild deserts "far away from men," and by those hermits who
 lived self-buried in the catacombs, away not only from man, but
 also from the light of day. Such people enjoyed among the
 peasants the fame of saints and were believed to possess miracu-
 lous powers. Many peasants would make vows of pilgrimage to
 places where such people lived self-buried, isolated and with-
 drawn from all human contact.

III

565 The peasant's complete submission to unpredictable and ar-
 156 bitrary forces was enhanced because of the lack of solidarity
 among the peasants themselves. After the peasant had been sub-
 jected to arbitrary regimentation and to permanent policing on
 the part of the authorities, he began to lose faith not only in
 the authorities but in his fellow peasants as well. Thus mistrust
 and suspiciousness rooted in patriarchal relations were height-
 ened. In such circumstances the peasant became increasingly
 distrustful of his neighbors, tended to withdraw within his own
 family and to become himself ready to spy on others.¹¹

In such conditions when isolated, helpless and self-oriented,

585 stand; the young men and women sing a song of glorification and praise. After its conclusion the groom thanks the company and rises; when he wants to lead the bride away, her brother resists him and has to be pacified with presents. This action hints at the old custom of purchasing the bride from her family or clan.

[788]

SCENE 6TH. *The blessing of the bride.* The parents of the bride take a plate with bread and salt, and a holy image and advance into the middle of the room, where they stand facing the door. The groom leads the bride out to them, the young couple bow three times to each, kiss the image and then the old people, and receive their blessing. The bride embraces her mother and clings to her, crying. The *svakha* separates them and leads her out, preceded by the *droushka* and bridegroom. At the door the party is met by the girl's brother with a stick, and a girl friend with a spinning comb (*prialka*), who refuse to let them pass with threats and offers of violence. The *droushka* is obliged to buy them off again with a present, and then the young people go out to the waiting friends, who form into a procession and go to the church, with noise and merrymaking. The companions of the girl also leave the room; the parents of the bride remain behind after the leave-taking, and sit down at the table with bowed heads and crying.

ACT SECOND.—THE MARRIAGE FEAST.

SCENE 1ST. At the house of the groom. The parents of the groom busy themselves in preparing the room for the reception of the young couple, on their return from the church. Outside is heard the noise of an approaching party. The father of the groom takes a holy image, the mother some bread and salt on a plate (a sign of welcome), and both advance to the door to meet the procession.

SCENE 2D. The friends come in first, salute the old people and place themselves around the room; there are a few moments of expectation.

SCENE 3D. Finally the *droushka* (best man) appears, walking slowly and solemnly, leading the young couple, with the